

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) today called on Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to launch a special Inspector General investigation into reports that U.S. assistance was provided to a university run by the HAMAS terrorist group in Gaza.

The Washington Times reported on Monday that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided more than \$140,000 in assistance to the HAMAS-controlled Islamic University in Gaza even after Congress restricted aid to entities or individuals "involved in or advocating terrorist activity."

Kirk raised the issue with USAID Administrator Randall Tobias during his appearance today before the Appropriations Subcommittee on State-Foreign Operations. Tobias assured Kirk he would instruct the Inspector General to investigate further.

"These allegations raise serious questions as to the integrity of US taxpayer assistance," Kirk said. "Current law prohibits foreign assistance to institutions that support or sponsor foreign terrorist organizations. At the very least, these reports demand an Inspector General investigation by the State Department and USAID."

On Tuesday, Kirk's office asked the State Department to disclose how much assistance was provided to the university from its Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The State Department has not provided an answer.

Kirk's office first inquired to USAID about assistance to schools with terrorist affiliations on February 20. USAID did not respond to Kirk's initial inquiry.

Last month, Palestinian security forces raided the university, confiscating 2,000 AK-47 assault rifles, hundreds of RPG launchers and ammunition. Senior Palestinian sources told the Israeli newspaper Yediot Achronot that kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit had been kept at Islamic University for most of 2006. The newspaper also reported five Iranian citizens were arrested during the Fatah raid, including an Iranian general who trained HAMAS activists to manufacture explosives in the university's chemistry labs.

“The State Department and USAID must explain to the American people how U.S. taxpayer dollars ended up in the hands of a de-facto terrorist training camp,” Kirk said. “An IG investigation is the only way to ensure this does not happen again.”